

Project Startup Report

Project Name: Legislative Applications Replacement Project

Agency: Legislative Branch

Business Unit/Program Area: Legislative Council

Project Sponsor: John Olsrud

Project Manager: Jim Gienger

Project Description

The current information technology systems in the North Dakota Legislative Branch have been designed and built over a period of several years beginning in the 1960's. The resulting custom-built applications are based on the unique requirements of the North Dakota legislative process and fully support the various activities. The longevity of the systems has provided time to correct, modify and enhance the systems to provide much of the required functionality. Most of the systems are mainframe-based and are hosted by North Dakota Information Technology Department (ITD). Many other computer systems were developed over time to support the entire legislative process.

After conducting research, discussing implementations with other states, and reviewing potential vendor tools and solutions, the recommendation for replacing the legislative systems within North Dakota is to purchase commercial off-the-shelf (COTS) components as much as possible. Through systems integration efforts, a robust solution will be developed using modern tools, languages, and techniques. All Legislative Session applications (Bill Drafting, Bill Status, LAWS, etc.) and miscellaneous applications (Lotus Notes applications, etc.) should be replaced together, over the next two biennia. Although the Administrative Code and Budget Status systems should not be replaced at this time, they will be more tightly integrated with the new systems.

By replacing the current legislative applications, North Dakota Legislative Council (NDLC) is expected to yield business value in the following ways:

- Reduce risk
- Enhance ease-of-use
- Reduce cost
- Enhance level of service to North Dakota legislators and other stakeholders.

Business Need or Problem

The problem of technology obsolescence and loss of knowledgeable support personnel affects the State of North Dakota legislature and related support agencies. The impact is a system that will be unsupportable (operations and maintenance) in the near future and a significant risk of loss of critical systems that support the legislative process.

NDLC is at great risk of having systems that are unsupportable in the near future due to the age (25+ years old) of key computer programs and related technologies. In addition, NDLC is in danger of losing support for these mission-critical systems due to the loss of key personnel (retirement or job change) and since certain critical system technologies (BookMaster, ISPF, REXX) may become, in practice, unsupported within the next four years.

The risk of loss of support is amplified by the strong possibility that it may take as many as 4 years to completely renovate the entire software platform. A new solution and renovation plan should be developed and implemented as soon as possible.

Key Metrics

Project Start Date	Estimated Length of Project	Estimated Cost
June 2007	18 months	\$3,910,827

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Benefits to Be Achieved	
Project Objectives	Measurement Description
Renovate system technologies to meet current technology requirements and position the solution for better long-term support	The PTC XML-based solution is in production replacing the existing mainframe-based applications
Provide XML editor program for bill drafting and journal modules	The Arbortext Editor is in production for creation of content, including bills, amendments, Century Code, Journal, memos, and agendas.
Automate the incorporation of budget status information into the bill drafting system	Ability to import fiscal data from the Budget Status System into the bill drafting environment.
Lower the system operation costs	Support and hosting costs

Cost/Benefit Analysis
ITD is actively working on a project to replace the mainframe that hosts most legislative applications today. Since the applications will not easily, if at all, port to the replacement platform, the Legislative Branch faces the likelihood of dramatic cost increases of hosting and support if the systems were to remain on the mainframe. It has been estimated that, if the applications were to remain on a mainframe platform, 10-year costs would be \$10.7M without increased hosting charges being considered. The 10-year cost associated with the replacement of the current applications has been estimated at \$8.3M, including hosting costs.

Key Constraints or Risks
<p>The key risks identified for the project include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Resource availability, coordination, and diversion. Insufficient resources mean that appropriately skilled individuals are not available when needed. Lack of necessary skills on the project team not only causes a shortage of resources needed to get the work done, but can reduce the productivity of other team members. Reassignment of team members to another team or to work outside the project is costly in terms of time lost in obtaining a replacement and learning curve for the replacement.• Schedule Slippage. Schedule slippage is the failure to deliver intended artifacts according to the schedule in the project plan. Any project entity can cause slippage. Such slippage can have a domino effect on subsequent tasks in the project and can put actions and benefits dependent upon timely project completion in jeopardy.